

Hi, I'm Amanda, author of [The Bridge](#) and I'd like to thank you for taking the time to learn about the Twelve Steps. I hope you will discover how they can help you and others build a deeper relationship with God, as well as find healing from addictions, compulsive behaviors, and the anxiety and depression that often result from them. Linking the steps of this program with the Scriptures from which they were derived is a powerful discipleship tool.

Issues of addiction and compulsive behavior are serious and specific! They require a depth of knowledge and experience to address. I know that many churches do not have the capacity for full-staffed or even volunteer-staffed ministries devoted to these problems. Thanks why I created this curriculum!

Though you may have Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in your church basement or fellowship hall, as a pastor or Bible study leader, you might not feel comfortable sending one of your church members to that meeting if you have no experience with the recovery community. Who knows what goes on at these things! Don't they say "Higher Power" rather than "Jesus"? Don't they let people use swear words? Don't they smoke in the parking lot afterward?"

Well, yes. Sometimes, those things are true in many Twelve Step groups. But a Christian who is rooted in the truth of God's word will not be derailed from faith by AA, Gamblers Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Alanon, Co-dependents Anonymous or the like. Rather, in these meetings, if they truly believe in the Biblical principles of surrender, grace, confession, and forgiveness, they will find tools to help them not only find sobriety, but a deeper relationship with Jesus. (I also suggest to you that if Jesus showed up today, he'd probably be hanging with the smokers in the parking lot, getting to know them and sharing some laughs.)

For many people who do not know Jesus, and frankly, aren't yet interested in him, they find the loving and everlasting God through the process of surrender in these programs. If you were to check out a meeting, you'd find many Christians working out the Great Commission right there in the chairs.

And so, my goal in creating this curriculum is to give you a place to teach your brothers and sisters what Christian recovery means, and then be able to shepherd them into meetings that are already going on in the community all around you – and maybe even on your own campus.

You don't have to start a Christ-centered AA meeting in order for your church members to find sobriety! Instead, host this curriculum a few times a year at church and lead your members across The Bridge. The real change will come when those in your groups choose to continue attending Twelve Step meetings, step studies, and work their steps with a sponsor. May God bless you as guide people into these next steps. – Amanda

**WELCOME LEADERS!** This document is to guide you in the “rules of engagement” for recovery small groups, which function quite differently from a Bible study small group. The more rigid structure of recovery meetings helps keep people safe as they share vulnerably with one another. They also protect you as the leader from having the group turn into a therapy session for its most troubled member. Often people coming to recovery meeting lack internal boundaries and social skills. These rules keep things running smoothly. They will also familiarize your church-going members with the flavor of a Twelve Step meeting, so when they continue into AA or the like, they won’t feel like a fish out of water.

## **SESSION 1: GRACE**

### **Step One**

#### **GROUP DISCUSSION TIME**

**Setting guidelines is critical in this session. You have people attending that potentially are at a pivotal point in their life and growth, and you want to make it as safe as possible. Read all the text in black out loud with your group. My additional notes are in blue, so you, the leader, understand the “why” behind the rules.**

#### **Guidelines for sharing:**

- We respect the anonymity of each person here. Who you see here, what is said here, when you leave here, let it stay here. **Anonymity is a key component to recovery. You may even remind the participants that if they see members of the group at church or in the community, they simply introduce one another as “my friend from church.”**
- Please no cross-talk. Cross-talk includes talking out of turn, giving advice, questioning the person who is sharing, holding private conversations or referring to what another person shared. **This is not a traditional Bible study, where people “riff” on one another’s stories. It is meant to feel a little less organic and more intentional.**
- Not giving advice here includes not following someone into the hallway or parking lot and giving advice there, unless someone asks specifically for input. We don’t give advice because we don’t want to treat people as though we are here to “fix” them. We also want to focus on our own recovery rather than someone else’s. **Of all the guidelines, this is usually the hardest to follow. Recognize advice attempts that start with things like “Have you tried...” Or**

**“ I had a cousin who had the same problem and she...” Many people give advice as a habit. But more critical to understand is that advice-giving is a way to deflect self-reflection.**

- Please keep your sharing focused on recent experiences and events. Speak in “I” statements instead of saying “you” or “we” and try to be emotionally present and honest. “I” statements make the group safer. **When we say things like “We’re all addicts so we all struggle with ....” it can make others uncomfortable, assumes things that might not be true and, again, is a way of deflecting our own self-reflection.**
- We are going to limit each person’s initial sharing time to three to five minutes, as you would experience in a Twelve Step support group like AA, Codependents Anonymous, etc. We use a timer so that each person is treated with equal importance. **Seriously, use the timer. It’s a great tool. You can give people a one-minute warning to wrap up when they get to the four-minute mark. This also prepares participants for the guidelines they may encounter in future groups. It also protects you, the leader, from becoming a counselor to someone who tries to bring a mountain of issues to this meeting.**

We’ll start by going around the room and introducing ourselves using our first names only, and one word describing how we feel today. **The reason we share feeling statements is to practice self-reflection. Addicts are often trying to cover their feelings with various medications and behaviors, so getting more comfortable with feelings is part of sobriety. However, if people can’t come up with a feeling, don’t force it.**

I’m \_\_\_\_\_ and tonight I’m feeling \_\_\_\_\_.

**Please answer one or both of these questions:**

1. Why did I come to this group?
2. What is a symptom that my life or a behavior in my life has become unmanageable?

**SESSION TWO: HOPE AND SURRENDER**  
**Steps Two and Three**

**GROUP DISCUSSION TIME**

**This week's lesson was an invitation to consider what characteristics of God attract us to a relationship with him, and what characteristics might make us fear God or see Him as distant. This is a radical idea for some people. Move through the questions, and if there's time left over, let them process their questions and share their opinion on the lesson. Be on your guard against Christians in the group who may want to correct other people's perception of God. If someone says they don't want God to be judgmental, for example, don't allow another group member to tell them that God *is* a judge who will judge sin. Say something like, "We're here to listen to people's thoughts on God, not to correct anyone's perception today."**

*Review the guidelines for sharing from Session One.*

*Introduce yourself using your first name only, and one word on how you are feeling tonight.*

Share on one or more of these subjects:

1. Who has influenced the way you see God in a good way?
2. What are signs that you need to be "restored to sanity"?
3. What does it mean for God to *care* for your life and your will?
4. Which of the benefits of God in Psalm 103 appeals to you most?

## SESSION 3: COMMUNITY

### Steps Four and Five

#### GROUP ACTIVITY

This is a critical moment for your groups! Traditionally, steps four and five are when many people drop out of the program, but research has shown that once people make it through their Step Five, they'll keep going. That's why it's included here, to de-mystify the step, make it less intimidating, and give participants a feeling of progress and accomplishment. Your job this week is to be the time-keeper. Give people five to 10 minutes to write, and wrap up when you see that people have finished. Then instruct them in their share time and watch the clock for them.

When I'm teaching, I let people pick their own partners, but if they are not grouping up on their own, I assign them a partner of the same gender.

If you want to model vulnerability, you can share your Step Five in front of the group with a co-leader or member of the class before having them do the exercise.

**Spend five to ten minutes writing out this brief Step Four inventory:**

1. Name three good character qualities that you possess and the behavior attached to them. (Example: I am compassionate. I show that by serving in the local food pantry.)
2. Write down the main character defect(s) – limit to three – that brought you to this class.
3. Write down three people you may have hurt because of this defect.
4. Write down three people, systems, authorities or realities that you resent.

5. Write down three people or experiences that have hurt you.

**Share your inventory with a partner and then switch roles. Each speaker gets five minutes to share.**

**Speaker:**

Share your answers from:

- question 1 (a positive character quality),
- question 2 (a character defect that brought you here),
- AND either question 3 (a person you hurt), 4 (something or someone you resent), *or* 5 (someone who has hurt you).

**Listener:**

**We direct the listener this way so there is virtually no possibility of the person sharing being wounded or offended by the listeners' response.**

As listener, use only these responses: "Okay," "Go on," and "I'm listening."

Do not say, "me too" or share your story in response. Also, do not offer advice, and don't display shock or awe in your body language or facial expressions.

When you think the speaker is finished, say, "Is there anything you want to add?" And then, "Thank you for being so honest with me."

Then switch roles.

Continue to work on your inventory further in your individual time before next session.

## SESSION 4: RENEWAL

### Steps Six, Seven and Eight

#### GROUP TIME

**This week, make sure to offer lots of encouragement to your group members for sticking with the class. Also remind them that they are allowed to take these steps in small pieces; this is only an introduction and an overview.**

*Start with your name and one word describing how you are feeling. Answer one or more of these questions.*

1. What character defect are you ready to have God remove?
2. What frightens you about asking God to remove your defects of character?
3. Who is the first person you want to write down on your amends list?

## SESSION 5: FORGIVENESS, RENEWAL, REPEAT

### Steps Nine, Ten, Eleven and Twelve

The last week! Congratulations on making it. If you look around your room and see less people than you started with, don't be discouraged. Recovery is a narrow door to walk through, and not everyone who starts this journey finishes it the first time.

If you're comfortable, share with the group about what you've learned in this series before group discussion. Do you have compulsive behaviors you never recognized? Did God reveal a defect of character? What did you learn about God's character?

Before your group meets, you have an important job to do! Have a list of next steps printed and ready for your participants. If you have Twelve Steps meetings on your campus, share the dates and times. Also share these website addresses, where they can do a meeting search. Make sure you ask people what their next step is. Saying it out loud is good for accountability.

Alcoholics Anonymous: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

Alanon, for those affected by the addictions of friends and family [www.alanon.org](http://www.alanon.org)

Co-dependents Anonymous [www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)

Overeaters Anonymous [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org)

Narcotics Anonymous [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)

[www.gamblersanonymous.org](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org)

Sex Addicts Anonymous [www.saarecovery.org](http://www.saarecovery.org)

### GROUP TIME

*Share your name and one word describing how you are feeling.*

1. Why do you think confronting someone who has wronged us is not a part of this particular discipleship process? How do you feel about that?
2. What is a recent wrong you can "promptly admit" today? It doesn't have to be a "big" one. Just practice by naming one slip-up from the last 24 hours.



3. Are you ever tempted to ask God for his will for others, or to impose your will on others? How could Step Eleven help you focus better on yourself?

4. What is your next step after this class?

**Commented [KB1]:** should there be journaling activities after the last session?